

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
MEN' S ROLES IN A GENDER
EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE

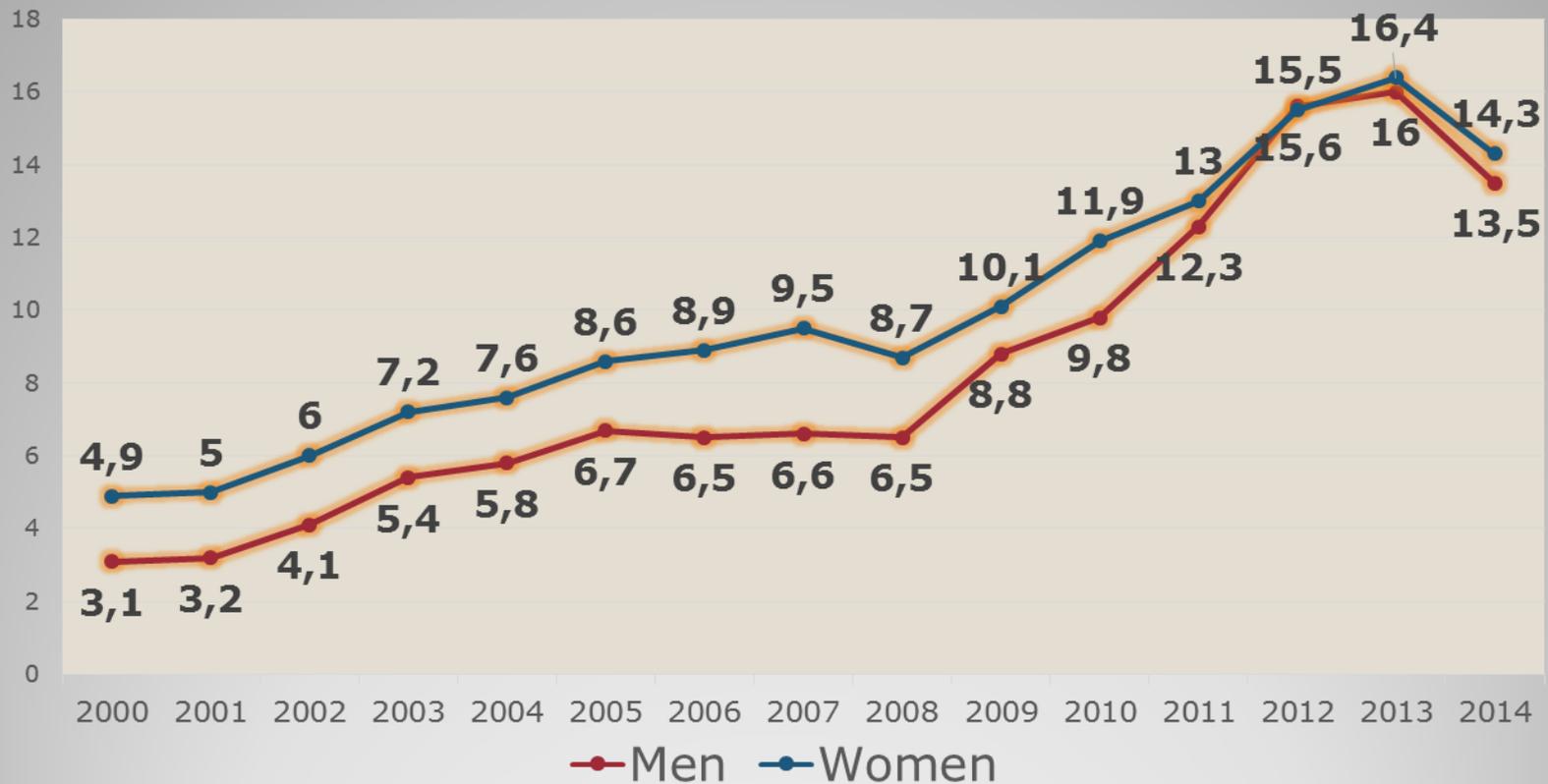
***Men and women in unemployment:
quantitative and qualitative
perspectives***

Sofia Aboim
ICS-UL

Main Aims

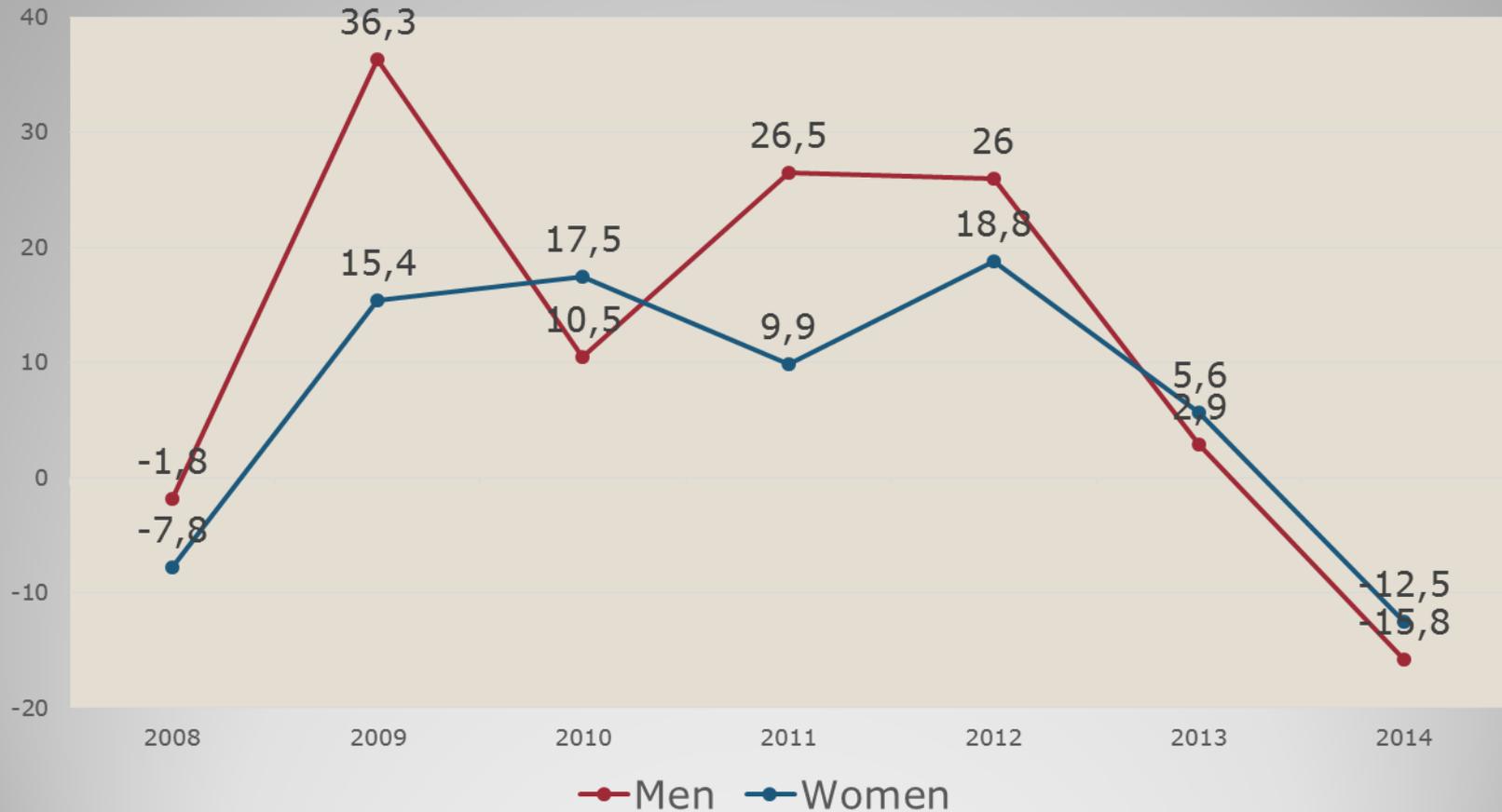
- Monitoring the impact of unemployment and precariousness on the 'gender order'
- Researching unemployed men and the effects on lives and gender norms
- What are the consequences of the rise in men's unemployment?
 - Discourses on the 'crisis of masculinity' and the loss of the breadwinner status?
 - Changes in men and masculinities towards gender equality?
 - Barriers hindering a more 'inclusive masculinity' (Eric Anderson, 2009)?
- Exploring the ways in which unemployed men (re)construct their identities and practices by reference to the norm of masculine power and success; *being the (main) provider*.
- Quantitative and qualitative data (European Social Survey 2010 & in-depth interviews with unemployed men)

Unemployment rates in Portugal



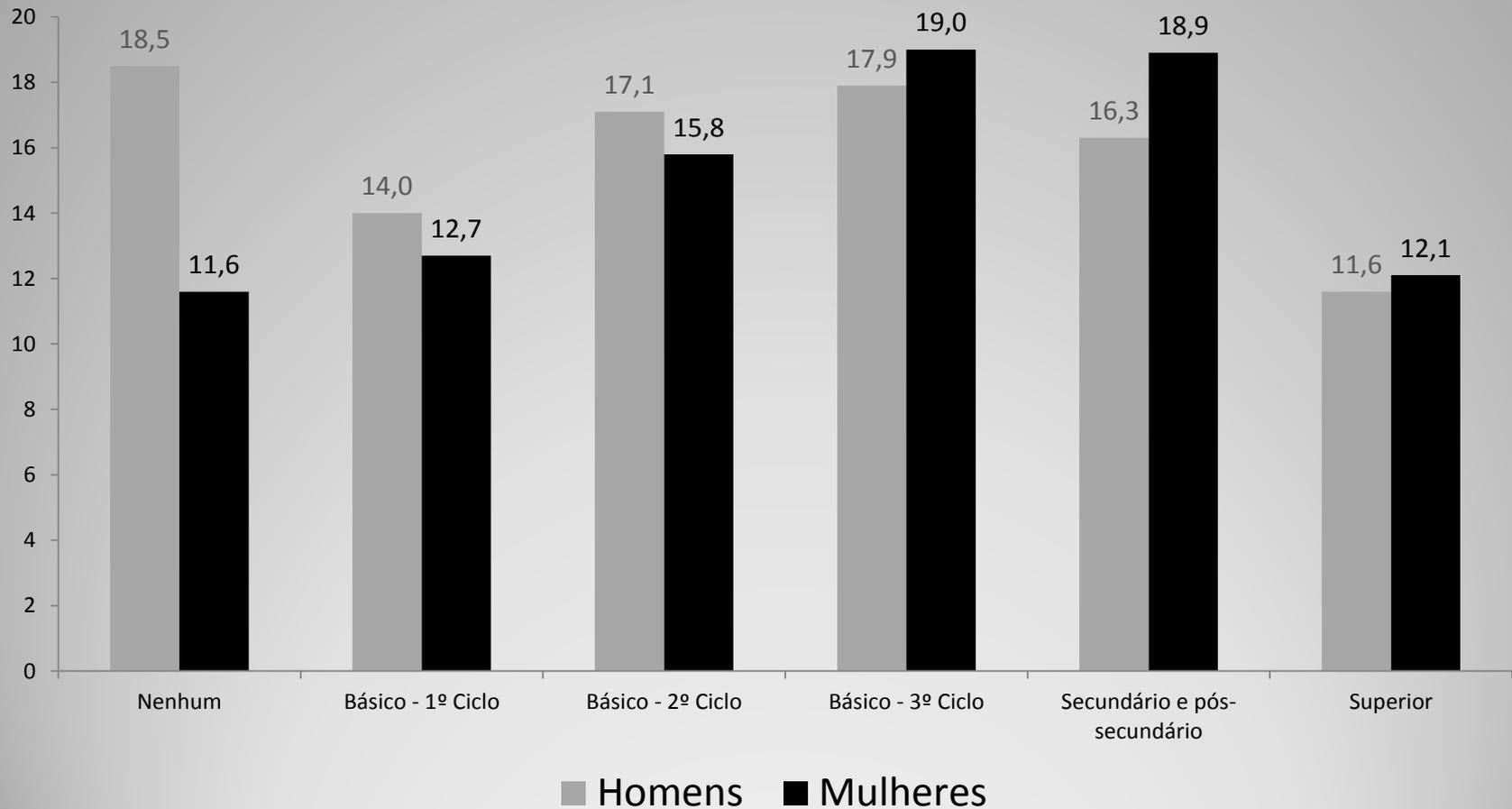
Source: Pordata/INE-Inquérito ao Emprego

Growth rate in unemployment, Portugal



Source: Pordata/INE-Inquérito ao Emprego

Unemployment rates by gender race educational attainment, 2012



Source: INE-Inquérito ao Emprego

Patterns of conjugal division of paid labour, ESS 2010

	Both full-time	Men full-time & women part-time	Women full-time & men part-time	Male bread winner	Female bread winner	Both unemployed
Portugal	57,9	3,8	1,3	17,9	16,5	2,6
Belgium	56,4	11,8	1,7	17,0	11,7	1,3
Bulgaria	56,7	1,4	0,7	19,6	20,1	1,5
Switzerland	55,5	18,0	1,2	18,0	7,0	0,4
Cyprus	61,7	2,5	1,9	22,7	8,5	2,7
Czech Republic	71,0	2,1	0,9	17,4	7,8	0,8
Germany	55,8	14,1	1,7	16,9	10,3	1,1
Denmark	71,6	5,9	0,7	11,3	10,1	0,4
Estonia	66,6	5,0	0,3	17,1	11,0	0,1
Spain	53,9	5,1	1,0	28,1	10,2	1,7
Finland	66,4	4,2	1,8	15,3	12,1	0,3
France	62,6	7,9	1,3	15,1	12,3	0,8
United Kingdom	52,5	17,2	2,3	15,6	11,6	0,7
Greece	43,0	4,7	0,8	33,1	11,3	7,1
Croatia	54,1	,8	0,8	23,9	16,6	3,8
Hungary	58,3	2,9	0,8	19,9	16,4	1,7
Ireland	47,0	14,5	1,3	22,1	12,4	2,7
Netherlands	52,3	22,9	3,1	13,5	7,5	0,7
Norway	69,6	9,0	1,9	11,2	8,0	0,2
Poland	60,0	4,5	1,1	21,8	11,3	1,2
Sweden	75,8	7,3	1,6	8,8	6,1	0,4
Slovenia	63,7	2,1	0,5	15,0	16,6	2,2
Slovakia	66,9	2,6	0,2	13,9	15,5	0,9

Men's unemployment from a qualitative perspective (FCT funded project 'Men at the Margins')

- In-depth interviews with 12 unemployed men (long-term unemployment) carried out in 2012, when male unemployment rose to historical figures.
- Diversity in terms of age, education, work trajectories and conjugal/family life courses.
- Focus on the transition to unemployment and the impact on identity and practices. *Unemployed men, as a group, symbolize the loss of the breadwinner status.*
- Focus on difficulties, coping strategies (e.g. precariousness) and support networks.
- Among the 12 unemployed men in the sample, 5 have higher education and 8 had no income at the moment of the interview; 4 were below age 30 and 4 above age 50.

PREARIOUSNESS AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUNG MEN: 'NO FUTURE ON SIGHT'

In and out of the labour market: the normalization of precariousness
Different forms of precariousness along lines of education

Giving up/postponing family life and parenthood

Hélio, 31 years old, dropped his PhD for lack of resources. Hélio's partner, also unemployed, was forced to migrate to the UK, and he went back to his parent's home. He has no plans of having children or even a place of his own in the near future. He would like to join his partner but has not found a suitable job."

"...in Portugal it is very complicated, even when a person has a university degree. I don't imagine myself having any form of stability, it's over... I almost finished my PhD and already worked for the minimum wage as a waiter. With so little it is impossible to live or to make any sort of plans (...) my girlfriend, we lived together, but she also lost her job and decided to go to the UK. She made it more or less, but for me it seems impossible. Now I'm just living with the support of my parents again, and trying to find something, whatever. I would like to be with my girlfriend again but I just don't know. Even migrating is not that easy, and I feel I just gave up everything, my ambitions. I just don't know what to expect...a miracle, only a miracle..."

PREARIOUSNESS AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUNG MEN: 'NO FUTURE ON SIGHT'

In and out of the labour market: the normalization of precariousness

Different forms of precariousness along lines of education

Giving up/postponing and migrating

Nelson, 35 years old, incomplete secondary education, divorced without children; Nelson's unemployment allowance is ending and he is unable to find a new job. He survives with family support and had to move in with his sister.

"My unemployment allowance is ending... and now what? I'm feeling desperate always wondering what to do with my life, after losing everything, no wife, no family, no job. That's not fair, I've worked hard since I was 17... and now nothing! I know I need a change, but it's not easy (...) I think my only option is to try my luck abroad and forget about Portugal. I've tried and tried and I'm just sick of it, It seems that I don't have a place, that I don't exist. Now maybe I will go to France because I speak French, and after all my father worked there for many years too. I guess it will be my luck. I'm divorced now, don't have children because it was impossible and I can go on my own. I like Portugal and this is not what I wanted, I had a life here, but after losing everything and at 35, I don't have options..."

PRECARIOUSNESS AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUNG MEN: 'NO FUTURE ON SIGHT'

Difficult starts: (not) entering the labour market

Fábio, 31 years old, single, has a degree in Portuguese Studies, and lives with his parents. He graduated at 24 and always had precarious 'jobs', even as a student. He never found a steady job, and only managed to work in Call Centres, Summer jobs and bars. He is unemployed for more than a year. Fábio regrets the impossibility of building the career he had once imagined and his continuous financial dependence and the impossibility of planning a family life of his own.

“When I graduated, I remember thinking: now is the time, go and get it...but it simply did not work out. Over time, my situation is leaving me very depressed, weaker, more frail and scared ...When I was 18 just starting college I felt so independent, but then it was gone. I'm still stuck to this idea, this dream of a career, and I feel frustrated, like if my only option is to give up my future and just try to survive. I don't have a clue of what to do...”

And I'm much more self-conscious when I think of finding a girlfriend, because I just cannot help myself...being unemployed is just too negative for a man.

UNEMPLOYMENT AFTER 45: *DISRUPTION AND LOSS*

Too old for the labour market, too young for retirement

More time for the family (in spite of everything)

Artur, 45 years old, is married and has two children (21 and 14). He has an incomplete university degree in the area of engineering. Artur lost his job two years ago.

“It was devastating. I tried to be optimistic for about six months and then I collapsed (...) because I felt hopeless and worthless, as a man, as a human being. I have tried, but it seems impossible to find a job, at least one that pays what I consider decent, especially now that my daughter needs me to pay for her studies. I feel a burden to my wife...

Of course, I am at home almost all the time, so I try to compensate. I’m more available for my children, so I feel the obligation to take care of them. They need to eat right? Now that’s me. My wife is working overtime because of the money, and I have to do something around the house. But I don’t feel that’s enough...”

UNEMPLOYMENT AFTER 45: *DISRUPTION AND LOSS*

Waiting for retirement

Masculinity and the loss of the breadwinner role

Lourenço, 60 years old, is married and has two children (21 and 29). He owned his own business (in the area of marketing) but the company bankrupt. He is just waiting for retirement and lost not only his income but his sense of worth as a man used to provide for the family. His discomfort is evident:

[talking about his children and family] *“I don’t feel good about it. I don’t feel good as an unemployed man. I feel... diminished. I know it’s my pride talking, but I feel very, very bad. My wife is bringing the money now and I don’t know how to handle that. I also feel that I failed my children. They say nothing, but I sense their disappointment. (...) And just being seen as an unemployed man is terrible. That’s why I really can’t wait for retirement. It’s not just about the money. It’s my dignity...”*

Final remarks

- **Younger men and absent futures**
 - Relative normalization of precariousness
 - Frustration, but living in accordance with common troubles
 - Postponing or just giving up family projects
 - More openness to gender equality, and less emphasis on the loss of the breadwinner status, even if it is more a discourse than a practice
- **Older men waiting for retirement**
 - Loss of worth and a valued male identity as breadwinner
 - Lack of options and depressive feelings
 - Ambivalence towards family life and less capacity/opportunities to embrace change